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EDUCATION AND CAREERS OF REMEDIAL READING SPECIALISTS IN NEW YORK CITY.

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PRACTICES RELATED TO THE EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND CAREERS OF READING REMEDIATION SPECIALISTS IN NEW YORK CITY ARE REVIEWED. NEW YORK CITY WAS STUDIED BECUASE ITS PROGRAM OF REMEDIATION IS EXPANDING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF LARGE NUMBERS OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN, MANY OF WHOM ARE SEVERELY RETARDED IN READING. THE STUDY INDICATED THAT NEW YORK CITY REQUIRES NO ADVANCED EDUCATION DEGREES IN THIS FIELD AND DOES NOT OFFER ADDITIONAL SALARY FOR ADVANCED PREPARATION. SPECIAL POSITIONS SUCH AS CORRECTIVE READING TEACHERS, READING IMPROVEMENT TEACHERS, DISTRICT CONSULTANTS, AND READING COUNSELORS ARE FILLED WITH CLASSROOM TEACHERS WHO ARE UNTRAINED AS SPECIALISTS. LOCAL UNIVERSITIES OFFER HIGHER DEGREES FOR READING SPECIALISTS, BUT, BECAUSE OF SALARY DIFFERENTIALS OFFERED ELSEWHERE, TRAINED PERSONNEL SEEK EMPLOYMENT ELSEWHERE. TABLES AND REFERENCES ARE INCLUDED. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE TENTH ANNUAL CONGRESS OF THE INTER-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PSYCHOLOGY (LIMA, PERU, APRIL 2-6, 1966). (MC)

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# EDUCATION AND CAREERS OF REMEDIAL READING SPECIALISTS IN NEW YORK CITY*

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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A comprehensive report of practices in the U.S.A. related to the education, training and careers of remediation specialists would be difficult, partly because great heterogeneity characterizes these practices, and partly because no recent comprehensive survey has been made. In 1958, without extracting the function of remediation from among the variegated functions of the Reading Specialist, Robinson made a "short composite summary of available literature in 18 references." This four-page leaflet published under the title, Reading Specialist, Occupational Abstract No. 212, is now outdated, as are other studies which dealt with occupational information, written by Traxler (1953) and Dever (1956).

The position of Reading Specialist, a relatively new one about 15 to 20 years old, has developed with little guidance or control from governmental bodies. Most states, including New York State, do not certify reading specialists, nor do they specify required competencies. As a result, classroom teachers enter the field informally upon the invitation of a supervisor and at best receive in-service guidance or take courses to fill on-the-job needs. There is, however, a growing movement, spearheaded by the International Reading Association, to require certification.

For the relatively small but ever-increasing number of people who elect to make reading their area of study, course requirements and training are decided by individual universities, and the job functions are specified by the educational policies, economic exigencies, hiring practices, and educational philosophy of the employing institution. Because of the resultant heterogeneity, this paper will be limited to New York City, where concentration on remediation is expanding to meet the needs of large numbers of disadvantaged children, a large proportion of whom are severely retarded in reading. A summary of requirements for degrees in Remedial Reading will be made for two large private universities, New York University and The Teachers' College of Columbia University, and for one college within The City University of New York, i.e., The City College, all three of which have fairly comprehensive programs in the field of reading, with varying degrees of emphasis on remediation. The requirements for positions within the New York City school system, for service both within the schools and in the Special Reading Services (Reading Clinics) will be summarized briefly.

Preparation for a special degree in Remedial and/or Developmental reading in all three institutions is reserved for the graduate level of study; indeed, this is characteristic of most U.S.A. university programs. Thus, a bachelor's degree in allied content areas, i.e., Education or Psychology, is prerequisite for entrance into a specialized reading program, leading either to a master's degree, an advanced certificate, or a doctoral degree. Table I presents the degree offerings of each of the three selected universities and the departments from which they emanate.

TABLE I

DEGREE OFFERINGS IN REMEDIAL READING AND DEPARTMENT PLACEMENT IN THREE SELECTED UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

| | MASTER'S DEGREE<br>30 pts beyond B.A. + thesis and/or comprehensive examination | PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA or ADVANCED CERTIFICATE<br>60 pts beyond B.A. + departmental approval and/or individual research project | DOCTORAL DEGREE: Ed.D. or Ph.D.<br>70-90 pts beyond B.A. + dissertation |
|---|---|---|---|
| New York University | Department of Educational Psychology<br>Teachers and Supervisors in Remedial Reading | Department of Educational Psychology<br>Sixth Year Certificate for Teachers and Supervisors in Remedial Reading | Department of Educational Psychology |
| Teachers' College, | Department of Psychology:<br>Remedial Reading and Psychology of School Subjects | Department of Psychology:<br>Professional Diploma as Reading Specialist in the Elementary School<br>Reading Specialist in the Elementary and Secondary School<br>Reading Specialist in the Secondary School and College | Department of Educational Psychology |
| The City College of New York | School of Education:<br>Developmental and Remedial Reading | School of Education:<br>Advanced Certificate in Curriculum and Teaching: Reading and Related Language Arts | None |

Table II gives the course offerings in several disciplines for each of the three selected university programs in reading. The disciplinary emphasis of each institution is made apparent by the nature of the courses offered.

TABLE II

COURSE OFFERINGS OF THREE SELECTED UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

| | New York University | Teachers' College | The City College of New York |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reading | 4 course sequence in Prevention, Detection, and Correction of Reading Disabilities:<br>1) Foundations<br>2) Diagnosis<br>3) Correction<br>4) Remedial Reading Practicum,<br>Seminar in Remedial Reading,<br>Meeting Reading Problems in High Schools, Methods and Materials | Reading in Childhood Education,<br>Children's Literature,<br>Psychology of Reading Difficulties,<br>Practice in Diagnosis,<br>Case Studies of Reading Difficulties | Advanced Course in the Teaching of Reading,<br>Diagnosis & Treatment of Reading Disabilities,<br>Practicum in Remedial Reading,<br>Advanced Practicum in Remedial Reading,<br>Workshop in Diagnosis & Remedial Reading,<br>Advanced Seminar in Problems in Reading,<br>Oral-Written Communication in Language Arts,<br>Curriculum Enrichment Through Children's Literature,<br>Selection & Development of Reading Materials |
| Psychology | Educational Psychology,<br>Advanced General Psychology,<br>Developmental Psychology,<br>Personality,<br>Behavior Disorders in Children,<br>Social Psychology,<br>Experimental Psychology | Educational Psychology,<br>Developmental Psychology,<br>Personality Adjustment of Children,<br>Psychology of Adjustment,<br>Social Psychology for Education,<br>Projective Techniques and Case History Methods | Educational Psychology,<br>Appraisal of Intelligence, Aptitude & Learning,<br>Appraisal of Personality,<br>Personality Development & Deviation,<br>Speech Pathology,<br>Psychopathology,<br>Mental Health Problems |

TABLE II (Continued)

COURSE OFFERINGS OF THREE SELECTED UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

| | New York University | Teachers' College | The City College of New York |
|---|---|---|---|
| Psychology (continued) | | Individual Psychological Testing | |
| Measurement, Research & Statistics | Measurement & Evaluation, Research Design & Methodology, Thesis Seminar in Educational Psychology | Measurement, Group Testing in Schools, Understanding Simple Statistics | Seminar in Educational Research, Critique of Research, Individual Research & Teaching in Curriculum, Evaluation of Research in the Language Arts |
| Curriculum & Teaching | Seminar in the Organization and Supervision of Reading Improvement Programs | Supervision & Curriculum, Improvement in Elementary Schools | Choice of Courses in Supervision and Curriculum |
| Guidance | | Guidance of Children, Parent Counseling | Child Guidance Problems, Discipline & Behavior Problems |

## POSITIONS IN REMEDIAL READING AVAILABLE IN NEW YORK CITY

In New York City, positions open to Remedial Reading specialists are in four categories: 1) Corrective Reading Teacher, 2) Reading Improvement Teacher, 3) District Reading Consultant and 4) Reading Counselor.

### Corrective Reading Teacher (CRT)

There are 461 CRT's in 520 of the over 600 schools in the system. Some schools receive the part-time service of one CRT, while schools with special programs related to the current concentrated efforts at integration and compensatory education are assigned two or three CRT's, i.e., Paired Schools, Open Enrollment Schools, More Effective Schools and Special Service Schools.

The CRT's, appointed at the discretion of the school principal, are selected from the ranks of permanent teachers with minimally three years of classroom experience and no special educational prerequisites are established, but the CRT's are required to take some reading courses, either in-service or at a university. Prior to the decentralization of the school system in 1965, continued in-service orientation was planned centrally but now, it is under the aegis of the District Reading Consultant.

The function of the CRT is remedial in nature. Retarded readers are referred to her by either the teacher or a supervisor. Children performing below grade level are selected for remediation, which they receive in groups of eight to ten. Prior to banning of group intelligence testing in the New York City schools, the criterion for placement in remedial groups was performance one and a half to two years below ability level. This policy, which opened the service to bright under-achievers, is no longer possible since intelligence ratings are not recorded.

### Reading Improvement Teacher (RIT)

There are 760 RIT's for a total of 520 of the over 600 schools in the system, with a heavier concentration in those schools which have programs designed for integration and compensatory education. As a result of the efforts of the Teachers' Union, the RIT category was established with the primary function of relieving classroom teachers for a period of relief and preparation.

The RIT either reads stories to the children or teaches some skill requested by the teachers.

No educational prerequisites for this position are established other than preparation for teaching. The appointment to RIT is made from the classroom teaching staff at the discretion of the principal. Thus, the RIT is usually a teacher who has a good record of performance within the school, and receives further in-service and some course training after becoming an RIT.

District Reading Consultant is traditionally a permanently appointed teacher who has taken a considerable number of reading courses, but who does not necessarily have a degree in Reading. She is appointed at the discretion of the District Superintendent, and is selected on a high level of performance as a teacher of reading. Experience and in-service training through monthly meetings with a city-wide supervisor and periodic lectures by university specialists of high caliber have until recently been chief sources of career training. There were 28 reading consultants in the 30 districts of New York City until a recent reorganization of the New York City school system (1965), when the position of District Reading Consultant was made optional, subject to the discretion of the District Superintendent. Although all but one were kept on as reading consultants for the districts, there is no longer a central organization or central in-service training, the chief impetus of in-service development of the reading consultants. Now, answerable to the district superintendent, the role of the reading consultant is designed to fill the specific needs of the particular district, and lacks the central working arrangements and mutual interaction that characterized their group before the decentralization of the city school system.

Reading Counselor

There are 33 reading "counselors" or remedial reading teachers in the eleven clinics in the Special Reading Services of the New York City school system, three in each clinic. These counselors are selected on the basis of better than average over-all performance in the classroom. They receive in-service training both in an orientation program and in an on-going staff development program, and learn to function as remedial specialists in a team consisting of a full-time psychologist who provides clinical diagnosis, a

full-time social worker and a part-time psychiatrist, who make up the "clinical staff."

Reading Specialists in the New York City school system, whether they work within the schools or in the clinics of the Special Reading Services, receive the same salary as teachers. The lack of differential causes the recipients of special degrees in Reading to seek employment in outlying suburbs where salaries are higher, or in college teaching where status gratification is higher. Thus, the universities in the City of New York appear to be training reading specialists for college-level teacher training, college-level clinical work, or remedial and supervisory work in other parts of the metropolitan area and more distant communities. The person who received her doctorate in Remedial Reading usually seeks employment on a college level either as clinician, teaching professor or a combination of both.

For a general view of the types of services provided non-readers and under-achieving readers in the U.S.A. as a whole, reference is made to the Harvard Report on Reading in the Elementary Schools, The First R (1963). Questionaire returns from 795 school systems throughout the U.S.A. made it clear that the two services most commonly provided were group and individual.

Furthermore, the data as shown in Table III indicates that (1) clinical diagnosis and treatment were provided slightly more frequently for nonreaders than for under-achieving readers, (2) individual instruction was provided slightly more frequently for under-achieving readers than for nonreaders either by the classroom teacher or specialists, and (3) instructional services were most often provided by the classroom teacher.

It is of special interest to note the high percentage reported for the individual instruction of nonreaders by classroom teachers in this nationwide survey.

TABLE III

TYPES OF SERVICES PROVIDED NONREADERS AND UNDERACHIEVING READERS IN 795 SCHOOL SYSTEMS, EXPRESSED IN PERCENTAGES

| Service | Nonreaders | Underachieving Readers |
|---|---|---|
| Clinical diagnosis | 53.6 | 50.4 |
| Clinical treatment | 26.3 | 23.3 |
| Individual instruction by persons other than classroom teachers | 37.9 | 42.7 |
| Group instruction by persons other than classroom teachers | 29.3 | 42.8 |
| Individual instruction by classroom teachers | 46.4 | 55.5 |
| Group instruction by classroom teachers | 34.7 | 58.5 |

## Conclusion

The relatively new field of Remedial Reading in the U.S.A. and specifically in New York City as an example of a city in urgent need for trained personnel in this field, suffers from lack of definition and lack of status. New York City, which neither requires advanced educational degrees in this area of specialization nor provides any reward in the form of additional salary, fills its positions for Reading Specialists with classroom teachers, many of whom do not possess special educational training specifically designed for training such specialists. In consequence, the city continually loses those teachers possessing the drive to obtain higher degrees in this field to the universities and to suburban communities in the metropolitan area.

The universities situated in New York City, both municipal and private, offer higher degrees for the Reading Specialist, but because of the lack of salary differential and status, the recipients of these degrees seek employment elsewhere, not in the city school system. Among the city's teachers are many who take sporadic courses in reading and some who move on to serve as Corrective Reading teachers, Reading Improvement teachers, District Reading

Consultants, and Reading Counselors in the Special Reading Services. Few of these, however, hold the higher degrees offered to Reading Specialists in the universities situated in New York City.

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